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ABSTRACT

This study presents the results of a five-year longitudinal study of students in the Florida Community College System (FCCS). First-time entering students in fall 1993 were tracked through spring 1998. The study examined the numbers of students who earned awards, transferred to the state university system, remained enrolled in FCCS, and were employed in 1998. The 49,005 entering 1993 students were classified into five groups: degree seeking (77.1%), certificate seeking (7.7%), adult high school diploma (0.1%), no formal award (10.0%), and other (5.2%). By the end of the tracking period, the overall rate of earned degrees was 20.6 percent. The degree rates within categories were 21.8 percent for Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree-seeking students, 16.3 percent for Associate of Science (A.S.) degree-seeking students, 34.2 percent for certificate-seeking students, and 43.9 percent for high school diploma-seeking students. The overall transfer rate to state universities was 12.7 percent, mostly comprised of A.A.- and A.S.-seeking students. Approximately one-fourth of the 1993 cohort was still enrolled in FCCS in 1998, and the rate of employment for the cohort groups ranged from 56.1 percent to 65.9 percent. The outcomes of remedial students were related to number and type of subject area deficiencies in reading, writing, or math. (RDG)

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Outcomes: A Longitudinal Look At the Class of Fall 1993

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OUTCOMES: A LONGITUDINAL LOOK AT THE CLASS OF FALL 1993

Background and Limitations

The Florida Community College System (FCCS) serves a diversity of students with a variety of goals. The System has been charged with providing instruction on everything from literacy skills to associate degrees. Many students enter the System in an exploratory mode and use this time to discover exactly what they want and need. Others enter knowing exactly which courses will provide them with the skills and/or background necessary to pursue their chosen career path. With this diversity of goals, it is often difficult to design outcomes that can be used to evaluate the System as a whole.

This study is based upon several assumptions. Foremost is that the intent recorded when the student initially entered the System represents that student's true educational goal. The second is that student academic success can be defined in terms of awards earned, the number of students transferring to the State University System (SUS), and the number of students still enrolled at the end of the tracking period. The final assumption is that successful outcomes are the sum of successful academic outcomes plus employment.

There are also several limitations to the study. The main one is that the tracking period was limited to the five-year period of Fall 1993 through Spring 1998 for the academic outcomes. Longitudinal studies conducted at several institutions within the System have indicated that students are still earning degrees eight and ten years after they initially entered. Another limitation is that university transfer is confined to the institutions within the Florida SUS. Thus both in-state private institutions, such as those that belong to the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), and the many out-of-state institutions where FCCS students continue their studies are excluded. The final limitation is that the employment information is limited to persons found by the tracking process used by the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program. The main source of their information is the unemployment compensation files maintained by the state Department of Labor and Employment Security. This means that self-employed individuals are not included.

STUDENT INTENT

The FCCS Student Data Base uses the following five major categories to classify initial student intent:

- Degree Seeking (Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, or undecided)
- Certificate Seeking (College Credit Certificate or Vocational Credit Certificate)
- Adult High School Diploma
- No Formal Award
- Other

In the fall of 1993, there were 49,005 students entering the FCCS for the first time. These first-time-in-college (FTIC) students were spread among the five categories with

77.1% degree seeking, 7.7% certificate seeking, 0.1% seeking an adult high school diploma, 10.0% with no intent of earning a formal award, and the remaining 5.2% with other intentions.

Academic Success

Awards Earned

All three types of degree seeking students earned awards during the study period. The overall rate was 20.6%. This rate is based upon results for both full and part-time students and those needing College Preparatory instruction as well as those fully college ready. The rate for AA seeking students (21.8%) was higher than that of AS seeking students (16.3%).

Certificate seeking students had higher award rates than did the degree seeking. This is not surprising since some certificates take less than one year to earn. The overall award rate was 34.2%. The rate for College Credit Certificates was 30.3% and for Vocational Credit Certificates was 34.6%.

The group with the highest award rate was students seeking an adult high school diploma at 43.9%. However, this was a very small group of students and thus caution should be used when considering this rate.

Even those students who said they did not want an award had an award rate of 6.5%. This is another indication of the fact that initial student intent may not reflect the intent of a later period in that person's academic career. The final group was Other. They also had a low award rate at 11.8%.

The overall award rate for this FTIC cohort was 19.8% during the five-year period. While awards are certainly a primary outcome of attending a community college, they are not the only indication of academic success. Nor does a five-year tracking period provide a complete picture of the number of awards eventually earned. As mentioned previously, longitudinal studies have indicated that community college students are still earning awards eight and ten years after they first entered an institution.

Transfers to the SUS

Florida is well known for its "2+2" system whereby students are encouraged to begin their journey toward a baccalaureate in a community college and then transfer to one of the SUS institutions for the final two years. Much work has been done to make this as seamless a process as possible. This includes such items as the statewide Articulation Agreement, Common Course Numbering and Common Prerequisites. Although most of the transfer activity occurs after a student has earned the AA, many students transfer prior to earning any type of award.

The overall transfer rate for the entire FTIC cohort was 12.7%. Almost all of this activity is based upon AA and AS degree seeking students. Nineteen point eight percent (19.8%) of the AA seeking students transferred to the SUS during this study. This was the highest rate of any group. The AS seeking students transfers were second at a rate of 5.7%. Negotiations are underway on state level AS to BS articulation agreements. It is

anticipated that once these new agreements are in place, many more AS students will transfer to the SUS.

Once students earn the AA degree, cohort studies have shown that seventy-five percent (75%) will transferred to the SUS. This high AA transfer rate is one of the reasons that information contained in the SUS "Hours to Degree" file indicated that 46% of the SUS graduates were community college transfers while 33% were native students.

Still Enrolled

A student was considered still enrolled if they had a course enrollment for any term of 1997-98. This definition was used due to the large number of part-time students within the System. Community college students often do not attend both major terms in a given year. In order to capture all of the students who are still making progress toward a degree, one must match against the entire year's data.

One fourth of the cohort was still enrolled during 1997-98. Among groups the rate ranged between 16.4% of students not seeking an award to 43.9% of those seeking an adult high school diploma. Again, this later group is very small and this rate may not be truly representative of this type student. The second highest rate was the 27.6% of the group that wanted a degree, but was unsure of whether it would be an AA or AS.

Having a large number of students still enrolled at the end of five years is not surprising given the part-time enrollment patterns of the typical community college student. Most students are part-time both in the hours they attempt during any given term and in the number of terms they are able to attend in a year. Most of the students work and often are only able to attend one or two terms and then must stop-out for a time in order to earn the money to re-enroll. A sixty-hour curriculum can take up to ten years to complete if you are only able to attend at the rate of one or two courses a year.

Employed

The final outcome considered was employment. The FCCS has the benefit of participating in the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP). FETPIP is a well-established tracking program that has access to the state's unemployment compensation records. This cooperative effort allows the FCCS to track cohorts of current or former students into the workplace and determine their employment status as of a given quarter. FETPIP matched all the incoming Fall 1993 students with records from the fall of 1998. The employment outcomes are based upon the results of that match.

The rate of employment was very similar for all the different groups. The highest employment rate of 65.9% was for those students seeking an adult high school diploma. The lowest (56.1%) was for those students with no intent of a formal award. Students seeking some type of award had rates between 62.0% and 64.9%.

Successful Outcomes

When all of these various outcomes are combined, the FCCS is able to determine the outcome status of three out of four of the students who initially entered the System in the Fall 1993 term. This means that approximately seventy-five percent of the cohort had

earned an award, transferred to the SUS, was still enrolled in the FCCS or was employed. The specific rates for award seeking students range from 72.1% to 76.5%.

COLLEGE PREPARATORY STUDENTS

While the FCS is concerned with outcomes for the entire entering student cohort, there is a subset of that group that has become a focus of attention during the past several years. These are the students needing remedial services. In the FCCS, those services are provided by the College Preparatory Program. That Program consists of pre-college level courses in mathematics, reading and writing. Students needing these services were grouped according to both the number of areas needed and what those areas were. These results were then compared with those obtained by students who arrived on campus fully college ready as defined by having either passing scores on all three components of the Common Placement Test (CPT) or presenting acceptable SAT or ACT scores.

Academic Success

Awards Earned

The need for College Preparatory course work presents barriers to earning awards in terms of additional academic, financial and time requirements. In addition, the area of need and the number of areas needed have a definite impact on the rate of awards earned. Mathematics continues to be the most problematic area of College Preparatory work. Students needing two areas have lower rates than those needing only one, and students needing all three areas have the lowest rate of all the groups.

Within this five-year tracking period, college-ready students had earned awards at a rate of 34.7%. Students needing only reading were next with a rate of 29.9%, followed by writing at 22.8% and mathematics at 16.0%. The award rate for students needing two areas ranged from 9.0% for those requiring both mathematics and writing to 16.9% for those needing reading and writing. Students needing all three areas had a rate of 5.8%.

Longer longitudinal studies done at the institutional level indicate that awards are still being earned as many as eight to ten years after students initially enter. It appears to be a safe assumption that the students most likely to take that long to complete an award program are exactly those students who have the extra barriers caused by the need for College Preparatory. Thus, the rates reported above should be viewed as merely the status at the end of five years and not as the final rates for the various groups.

Transfers to the SUS

Similar patterns are found in transfer rates. The highest rate is for those students who arrive college-ready. They transferred to the SUS at the rate of 27.6%. Other groups with double-digit rates were students needing only reading (21.8%), writing (20.0%), or both reading and writing (15.8%). If mathematics was needed, the rate was below 10.0%.

Still Enrolled

Over a quarter of these students is still enrolled at the end of five years. Those needing reading have the highest rate of 35.0%. The groups needing writing or mathematics were similar at 26.8% and 26.5% respectively.

Combining these three outcomes led to an overall academic success rate of 57% for students who were college-ready upon arrival. Students needing any amount of College Preparatory course work had an overall academic success rate of 37.7%. Groups needing only one area had rates ranging from 38.2% for mathematics to 57.2% for reading. Thus, those needing only reading were able to perform as well as the college-ready group. The rates for two areas ranged from 48.5% for students with needs in reading and writing to 30.5% for those needing mathematics and writing. As anticipated, the lowest rate, 29.4%, was for students needing all three areas.

Employed

The employment rates for these students are very similar to that presented earlier for degree seeking students. This is not surprising since most of the students taking the CPT had indicated that they were seeking either the AA or AS degree. These employment rates were the most consistent outcome of the study, ranging from a high of 68.5% for students needing all three areas of course work to 62.9% for those needing mathematics and writing.

Successful Outcomes

When all four outcomes are combined, the FCCS is able to account for 76.8% of the cohort. The highest overall success rate is for college-ready students at 80.2%. The lowest is for those students needing College Preparatory courses in mathematics and writing at 71.3%.

This overall success rate should not be interpreted as the final result for this cohort. With the data sources available to this Office, it was impossible to track all of the possible pathways a student might take. We know that many students transfer to private and out-of-state colleges and universities once they have completed a degree. The FCCS and several private institutions have even established agreements whereby upper division courses are provided by the private institution in community college facilities. Information contained in the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF) accountability plan indicates that AA students who transfer to those institutions have about a 60% graduation rate after three years. However, there is no centralized data system for the ICUF and other private institutions, so it is not possible to track from the FCCS to those systems.

Another pathway that is impossible to follow is out-of-state employment. Many students from the Panhandle region of the state will attend a Florida community college and then find employment in southern Alabama or Georgia. FETPIP is not in a position to track these individuals.

Conclusion

The level of positive outcomes displayed by the students in the Fall 1993 cohort is an indication of the high quality of the FCCS. System students are earning awards at rates that are the highest in the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB)¹ states. The formal and informal transfer processes between the FCCS and the SUS result in about 65% of the students earning an AA degree transferring within the first year following graduation. When these students are tracked for an additional one to two years, the rate increases to 75%. In addition, many students transfer prior to completing an associate degree.

Students needing some help in obtaining college-level skills are being served by the College Preparatory Program. They are completing degrees, transferring and finding jobs as well as remaining enrolled in the FCCS. The System is working with our K-12 partners as part of Florida's initiative to reduce the need for remedial course work. As this study indicates, the highest level of success within five years is obtained by those students who are college ready when they initially enroll. However, until all incoming students meet this level of preparation, the FCCS will continue to provide the same high quality College Preparatory Program.

The FCCS provides for the educational goals of a diversity of students. The outcomes presented here are ones that are in keeping with that variety. The results of this study indicate that the System is meeting the needs of Florida's citizens for postsecondary education through the associate degree level.

¹ Based upon information contained in preliminary *Student Progression Data Check Sheets*. These data are subject to change.

Division of Community Colleges
Office of Educational Effectiveness and Research

Awards Earned, Transfers, Enrollment and Employment of College Preparatory Students
By Areas Required
Based upon Fall 1993 FTIC with Complete Placement Scores

	Original Cohort		Awards Earned		Transfers to the SUS		Awards or Transfer		Still Enrolled		Academic Success		Employed		Successful Outcome	
	Number	Percent	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
College Ready	12,598	35.4%	4,366	34.7%	3,471	27.6%	5,141	40.8%	3,473	27.6%	7,184	57.0%	8,119	64.4%	10,098	80.2%
Need only Mathematics	9,178	25.8%	1,464	16.0%	854	9.3%	1,749	19.1%	2,431	26.5%	3,507	38.2%	5,849	63.7%	6,782	73.9%
Reading	1,272	3.6%	380	29.9%	277	21.8%	457	35.9%	445	35.0%	727	57.2%	863	67.8%	1,043	82.0%
Writing	1,463	4.1%	334	22.8%	292	20.0%	415	28.4%	392	26.8%	682	46.6%	963	65.8%	1,143	78.1%
Need Mathematics and Reading	1,861	5.2%	224	12.0%	173	9.3%	299	16.1%	520	27.9%	693	37.2%	1,243	66.8%	1,409	75.7%
Mathematics and Writing	2,555	7.2%	229	9.0%	155	6.1%	300	11.7%	598	23.4%	779	30.5%	1,606	62.9%	1,822	71.3%
Reading and Writing	1,616	4.5%	273	16.9%	256	15.8%	375	23.2%	581	36.0%	783	48.5%	1,015	62.8%	1,242	76.9%
Need all three areas	4,999	14.1%	291	5.8%	198	4.0%	403	8.1%	1,278	25.6%	1,470	29.4%	3,423	68.5%	3,770	75.4%
Needing any remediation	22,944	64.6%	3,195	13.9%	2,205	9.6%	3,998	17.4%	6,245	27.2%	8,641	37.7%	14,962	65.2%	17,211	75.0%
Total Cohort	35,542	100.0%	7,561	21.3%	5,676	16.0%	9,139	25.7%	9,718	27.3%	15,825	44.5%	23,081	64.9%	27,309	76.8%

Results based upon information contained in the Student Data Base for 1993-94 through 1997-98 and an FTICSUS file created for PEPC.
Employment based upon a Fall 1998 follow-up of the Original Cohort by FETPIP.

Awards Earned, Transfers, Enrollment and Employment of All Fall 1993 FTIC Students
By Initial Student Intent

Student Intent	Original Cohort		Awards Earned		Transfers to the SUS		Awards or Transfer		Still Enrolled		Academic Success		Employed		Successful Outcome	
	Number	Percent	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate	Number	Rate
Degree Seeking	37,759	77.1%	7,760	20.6%	6,181	16.4%	9,584	25.4%	10,122	26.8%	16,558	43.9%	24,085	63.8%	28,628	75.8%
AA	29,002	59.2%	6,308	21.8%	5,734	19.8%	7,997	27.6%	7,934	27.4%	13,418	46.3%	18,425	63.5%	22,182	76.5%
AS	7,840	16.0%	1,274	16.3%	447	5.7%	1,409	18.0%	1,935	24.7%	2,776	35.4%	5,089	64.9%	5,785	73.8%
Undecided	917	1.9%	178	19.4%	-	0.0%	178	19.4%	253	27.6%	364	39.7%	571	62.3%	661	72.1%
Certificate Seeking	3,780	7.7%	1,292	34.2%	32	0.8%	1,311	34.7%	644	17.0%	1,643	43.5%	2,354	62.3%	2,814	74.4%
CCC	399	0.8%	121	30.3%	7	1.8%	123	30.8%	81	20.3%	162	40.6%	259	64.9%	296	74.2%
VCC	3,381	6.9%	1,171	34.6%	25	0.7%	1,188	35.1%	563	16.7%	1,481	43.8%	2,095	62.0%	2,518	74.5%
Adult High School Diploma	41	0.1%	18	43.9%	-	0.0%	18	43.9%	18	43.9%	28	68.3%	27	65.9%	38	92.7%
No formal award	4,881	10.0%	315	6.5%	-	0.0%	315	6.5%	799	16.4%	974	20.0%	2,740	56.1%	3,005	61.6%
Other	2,544	5.2%	300	11.8%	7	0.3%	303	11.9%	436	17.1%	617	24.3%	1,442	56.7%	1,621	63.7%
Total	49,005	100.0%	9,685	19.8%	6,220	12.7%	11,531	23.5%	12,019	24.5%	19,820	40.4%	30,648	62.5%	36,106	73.7%

Results based upon information contained in the Student Data Base for 1993-94 through 1997-98 and an FTICSUS file created for PEPC.
Employment based upon a Fall 1998 follow-up of the Original Cohort by FETPIP.